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Allegiances

Rogue barn

Leader: Dash; dark brown tom with yellow eyes.

Second-in-command: Leaf; brown she cat with green eyes

Healer: Mouse; tan tabby she cat

Hunters:

Proudheart; light gray tom with green eyes

Spots; black she cat with gray and white flecks

Emma; lilac she cat

Seeker; pale gray tom

Rana; dark gray tabby she cat

Peacock; pure white tom with long fur

Almond; pale tan tabby she cat

Trainees:

Puma; dark gray tabby tom

Layla; white and gray she cat

Ginger; ginger tabby she cat

Parrot; tan and white tom

Kits and queens:

Rana; mother of Sweet Pea, Tiger, Smokey, and Courage

Poodle; fluffy white she cat; expecting Seeker's kits

Elders:

Moose; cranky brown tom

Chapter one

I lay in the dark, much past my bedtime, thinking.

Chapter two

My father told me that I shouldn't be scared. He told that to my littermates, as well.

Why are they all still scared?

Chapter three

I snort, flicking my tail tip irritably. My brother snuffles as my tail flicks over his nose.

Chapter four

I can feel the wind picking up speed, growing colder.

Leaf-fall is on its way.

Chapter five

All the hunters are scared.

Chapter six

And though I'll never admit it aloud...

Chapter seven

I'm a little scared, too.

Chapter eight

But I can't be scared! I must crush my fears like a bug underpaw!

Chapter nine

I am fearless.

Chapter ten

In the morning, my littermates and I play outside the barn.

The cold wind ruffles my fur. It feels good.

Chapter eleven

I want to go out into the big fields. The world is so big! It needs to be explored!

Chapter twelve

But my littermates are too scared.

Chapter thirteen

Weaklings.

Chapter fourteen

You must rule your fears! Or else they will rule you!

Chapter fifteen

My littermates tattle on me. My mother is angry.

Chapter sixteen

Angry about what? That I'm her only kit who isn't afraid of a dead mouse?!

Chapter seventeen

I sit in a cold corner of the barn, shivering.

The smell of mouse wafts around me. I want to catch it.

Chapter eighteen

I am forced to sit in the corner until sunset.

My mother can be cruel.

Chapter nineteen

While I sit, I have time to think. I don't like to think.

It gives me time to be scared.

Chapter twenty

I am angry now. I swat at a passing fly, acting as if it is all my fears.

They die along with the fly

Chapter twenty-one

I need to do something to be less scared.

But what?

Chapter twenty-two

I get an idea. The only way to be less scared is to *do* what you are scared of!

Chapter twenty-three

I don't mind the wait anymore. It will be worth it.

Chapter twenty-four

The wind is blowing even harder in the morning. I am chilled to the bone.

But I must carry out with my plan. I will never be fearless if I don't.

Chapter twenty-five

I walk outside, and, in plain sight of all the hunters, run.

Chapter twenty-six

This is great! I can feel my fears slipping off me like water!

I run faster, feeling the sheer joy of running.

I am fearless!

Chapter twenty-seven

I am stupid.

Chapter twenty-eight

I'm lost now. I can't see over the tall grasses. The screams and shouts of my friends and family have faded behind me long ago.

Chapter twenty-nine

I can't hunt. What will I do!?

Chapter thirty

I cannot panic. That will lead to fear. I cannot be scared

Chapter thirty-one

Maybe I can find some injured prey?

Chapter thirty-two

Unlikely.

Chapter thirty-three

Looks like I'm going hungry.

Chapter thirty-four

Night sets in. It is very cold, out in the open. It makes me a little...

Scared...

Chapter thirty-five

I almost smash my head against a tree.

I. Can't. Be. Scared.

Chapter thirty-six

I go to bed cold and hungry.

Chapter thirty-seven

I am stiff and cold in the morning. My belly growls, and my mouth is dry.

What if I don't find my family?

Chapter thirty-eight

I hiss at myself. Stop being scared! There is nothing to be afraid of!

Chapter thirty-nine

I try to follow my scent trail. It is old and stale, but it is there.

Chapter fourty

I can get back! But...

There is another smell.

Chapter fourty-one

Dog.

Chapter fourty-two

I hear the barks as it closes in on me... and I am afraid.

Chapter fourty-three

No time to punish myself. The dog is here...

And I am *very* scared.

Chapter fourty-four

I am down in an instant. I stand no chance...

Why won't it just finish me now, end my fear?

Chapter fourty-five

But then... I see my father. He is here! Here to fight with me!

Chapter fourty-six

But then... I see my father. He is here! Here to fight with me!

Chapter fourty-seven

My fear vanishes, and soon the dog is gone, running with its tail between its legs.

Chapter fourty-eight

"Dad!" I cry, running to him. "I-I'm sorry. For being scared..."

Chapter fourty-nine

"Why are you sorry for that?" He asks. Then realization hits him.

"You didn't think that I wanted you *never* be scared?"

Chapter fifty

"But... you told us to crush our fears, like a bug underpaw." I say. He has a confused look on his face.

"I never meant that." He says finally. "It's ok to be scared, Smokey."

Epilogue

I am still not scared. Of anything.

Well... I guess that's a lie. But I know now... I can be scared.

It's ok to be scared.